



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge *Planning for its Future*

Planning Update 1 / April 2010

A Message from the Refuge Manager



The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is embarking on a planning process to revise our Comprehensive Conservation Plan and we welcome your comments.

The Refuge is renowned for its wildlife, ecological integrity, scenic beauty, and wildness. Habitats include boreal forest, alpine and coastal plain tundra, coastal lagoons and barrier islands, making the Refuge one of the most biologically diverse high-latitude protected areas in the world. These characteristics make the Refuge a living laboratory for the study of naturally functioning arctic and subarctic environments.

The future of the Refuge is of concern to visitors who come to find adventure and solitude; to local residents dependent on its subsistence resources; and to millions of Americans who find satisfaction just knowing it's here.

The Refuge has been featured in the media for years. Most of the attention has focused on the decades-long debate about whether oil development should be allowed on the northern portion of the Refuge, commonly known as the 1002 Area of the coastal plain. Only Congress can resolve this issue. When or how Congress will do

this is unknown, so this is one issue the plan won't decide.

However, there are many other important questions regarding the Refuge's future that will be decided through the planning process. For example, how should the Refuge be managed to meet its purposes? How should the qualities for which it is known, including wildlife, naturalness, and wildness, be protected and made available for public use and enjoyment?

For National Wildlife Refuges, a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) is the over-arching plan that addresses these important questions. The CCP determines desired future conditions of the Refuge and provides guidance regarding what management actions are necessary or appropriate.

The first CCP for the Arctic Refuge was completed twenty years ago. We are now beginning a two-year process to revise it. Involvement by all segments of the public that care about the Refuge is essential to making the new plan the best it can be. I invite you to join us in this effort.

There will be opportunities for you to provide meaningful input throughout the CCP revision process. This is the first in a series of booklets about the Arctic Refuge and the revision of its CCP. This first booklet describes the planning process and how you can be informed and involved.

At this initial stage, I encourage you to read though this booklet, and to visit <http://arctic.fws.gov> to learn more about the Refuge. Tell us what is important to you about the Refuge and what concerns or issues you think the revised CCP should address. Use the form at the back of this booklet, use the fillable form on the web, mail or email written comments, or attend a public meeting.

We look forward to hearing from you soon,

Richard Voss
Refuge Manager

Inside this booklet

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The planning process



We are now at the first **public involvement** step of our planning process. Read through this booklet to learn about the Refuge and the plan. You can use the comment form in the back to let us know of ideas or concerns you have about Refuge management and what issues you think the plan should address. We will consider your comments as we write the first draft of the plan and develop a range of management alternatives.

Next year, you will have an opportunity to comment on the draft plan and alternatives. We will consider this second set of comments as we develop the final plan, scheduled for release in early spring 2012.

Why revise the existing Comprehensive Conservation Plan?

Much has changed since the CCP was completed in 1988, and these changes affect management of the Arctic Refuge.

- The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act became law in 1997, and it includes new requirements for Refuge management.
- New national policies provide direction for Wilderness stewardship, public use, wildlife conservation, and ecosystem management.

- A Federal Subsistence Management Program was initiated in 1990, in cooperation with the State of Alaska, to ensure rural Alaskan residents have a priority opportunity for consumptive use of fish and wildlife resources on federal public lands.
- Public use of the Refuge has changed, contributing to cumulative impacts, potential conflicts, and concerns about the quality of people's experiences.

- The Dalton Highway (see pages six and seven) is now open to the public. It provides new ways to access the Refuge, and it has changed patterns of use.
- New information about Refuge fish, wildlife, and habitats is available. Refuge staff have learned more about the status of wildlife populations, and how these populations use the Refuge's lands and resources.
- National interest in the Refuge is high.
- Climate change has emerged as a factor potentially affecting all aspects of the Refuge environment, and, while the outcome is uncertain, climate change scenarios must be considered in management decisions.



Autumn foliage - Dave Prestipino

What will the Refuge's new plan do?

- Make sure that management decisions meet the purposes for which the Arctic Refuge was established.
- Identify a management approach for the next 15 years, selected from a range of alternatives, that provides a clear statement of desired future conditions for the Refuge.
- Conduct a Wilderness Review to determine whether or not additional areas should be recommended to Congress for Wilderness designation.
- Include a Wild and Scenic River Review to assess whether or not additional rivers are suitable for Congressional designation.
- Fulfill the missions of the National Wildlife Refuge System and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- Make certain that Refuge management is consistent with national laws and policies.
- Provide long-term continuity in Refuge management.



Sheenjek River and Brooks Range - USFWS

The Refuge and its purposes

The Arctic Refuge was established in 1960, as the 9 million-acre Arctic National Wildlife Range, **“for the purpose of preserving unique wildlife, wilderness, and recreational values ...”** In 1980, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) enlarged the area to over 19 million-acres, renamed it the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, designated 8 million-acres of it as Wilderness, designated three Wild Rivers, and added four consistent purposes.

The ANILCA purposes are:

- (i) to conserve fish and wildlife populations and habitats in their natural diversity;
- (ii) to fulfill the international fish and wildlife treaty obligations of the United States;
- (iii) to provide the opportunity for continued subsistence uses by local residents; and
- (iv) to ensure water quality and necessary water quantity within the Refuge.

The Refuge’s purposes provide the foundation for determining its desired future conditions, the opportunities it will provide for the public, and the vision, goals, and objectives that will guide management decisions. However, it is important to remember that while the Refuge’s purposes are set in law, there is a range of alternatives by which these purposes can be met.

For each purpose, what management approaches do you think are appropriate? Are there opportunities, conditions, or uses that should be emphasized or become priorities? Are there problems or conflicts that you think should be addressed now?

The following text provides more information about Arctic Refuge purposes. Included are some examples of questions we’ve heard over the years that may help you as you formulate your comments.

Caribou on the coastal plain - USFWS



Wildlife Purpose

The Refuge’s mandates include both “preserving unique wildlife . . . values” (1960) and “to conserve fish and wildlife populations and habitats in their natural diversity . . .” (1980). Thus, the Refuge must sustain all naturally occurring fish and wildlife species, including their interactions, populations cycles and ecological roles.

- Do current Refuge management practices meet these mandates? Will they in the future?
- What Refuge management actions or research activities are needed or appropriate?

Wilderness and Wild River Purposes

Refuge management must meet the requirements of the Wilderness and Wild and Scenic River acts for the areas Congressionally designated as Wilderness and Wild Rivers (subject to several ANILCA provisions). Management must also ensure preservation of the Refuge’s wilderness character. Wilderness is a purpose encompassing a range of values—tangible and intangible—including scenic, scientific, symbolic, and heritage values and the wildness of creatures and natural processes.

- Is the Refuge meeting its wild river and wilderness stewardship responsibilities?
- What should Refuge management do, or avoid doing, to maintain, enhance, or perhaps restore the area’s wilderness character?
- How should we maintain the outstanding values associated with the Refuge’s three Wild Rivers?

Camping beneath the northern lights.
- Dave Prestipino



Recreation Purpose

The Refuge will provide opportunities for a range of recreational activities, including hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, hiking, river-floating, and camping. To date, Refuge management has sought to perpetuate conditions that enable visitors to experience authentic adventure, independence, self-reliance, exploration, and solitude.

- Are these or other qualities important to maintaining the area’s unique recreational value?

(Continued on page 4)

The Refuge and its purposes (continued)

- What should Refuge managers do, or avoid doing, to enable the kind of experience that visitors seek?
- Are there conflicts among uses, or between recreation and other purposes that need to be addressed?

Subsistence Purpose

ANILCA requires, consistent with its other purposes, the Refuge must provide “the opportunity for continued subsistence uses by local residents” and ensure that they can continue to use Refuge lands and resources to meet their physical, economic, traditional, and other needs. Subsistence activities include hunting, fishing, trapping and berry-picking.

- Does the Refuge adequately provide for subsistence use and related needs of rural residents?
- Are there concerns regarding opportunities for subsistence uses and other uses?



Subsistence fish camp on barrier island - USFWS

International Treaties Purpose

ANILCA specifies the Refuge must “fulfill international treaty obligations of the United States with respect to fish and wildlife and their habitats.” These treaties and additional international agreements relate to conservation of migratory birds, marine mammals, caribou, and fish.

- Is the Refuge meeting these obligations?

Water Resources Purpose

ANILCA specifies the Refuge ensure, to the maximum extent practicable, water quality and necessary water quantity.

- Is the Refuge meeting this mandate?
- Are there actions or studies that should be undertaken?

A vision for the future

Comprehensive Conservation Plans incorporate a vision statement—an inspiring expression of the Refuge’s special character, the core of what is most worthy of protection. Rooted in the Refuge’s purposes, the vision statement describes those qualities that should endure and be passed on to future generations.

The Refuge staff drafted the following vision statement. What do you think?



Lingonberries - USFWS

The Arctic Refuge Vision—Draft:

This untamed arctic landscape continues to sustain the ecological diversity and special values that inspired the Refuge’s establishment. Natural processes and traditional ways ebb and flow with the seasons; physical and mental challenges test our body, mind and spirit; and we honor the land and its wildlife with respect and restraint. Through responsible stewardship, this vast wilderness is passed on, undiminished, to future generations.



Draft goals for stewardship

Goals are broad statements that describe how Refuge management will meet Refuge purposes and achieve the vision. Goals identify and focus management priorities. They provide the foundation for developing specific management objectives and programs, and provide a context for resolving issues. The Refuge staff drafted the following preliminary goals. What do you think?

1. The Refuge is managed as a unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System to promote unparalleled natural diversity and biological integrity; uphold the ideals of wilderness stewardship; and perpetuate pristine landscapes.
2. Native species of fish, wildlife and plants are conserved in their natural diversity, and natural population densities, dynamics, and levels of variation prevail.
3. The biological integrity and environmental health of the Refuge are maintained, and ecological processes are allowed to shape the environment, essentially free of intent to alter or manipulate the natural order.
4. The Refuge retains its superlative wilderness character; prevents loss of naturalness and wildness, and preserves the designated Wilderness in a manner that exemplifies the purposes of the Wilderness Act, consistent with ANILCA provisions.
5. The Refuge's designated Wild and Scenic Rivers flow freely through unaltered corridors, their ecological functions and natural character are protected, and opportunities for recreation and subsistence uses are perpetuated.
6. The Refuge provides for wildlife/wilderness-associated recreational activities while protecting the physical and biological environment, and emphasizing adventure, independence, self-reliance, exploration, and solitude.
7. Local rural residents are provided the opportunity for continued subsistence uses on the Refuge, consistent with ANILCA provisions and other Refuge purposes.
8. Effects of climate change on Refuge resources are evaluated through research and monitoring, and are considered when making management decisions, which may range from allowing ecosystem to adapt and evolve without intervention, to active management of species and habitats.
9. The Refuge, a conservation area of "National Interest" for visitors as well as for millions who find satisfaction just knowing it exists, maintains its heritage and symbolic values, and passes these as bequests to future generations.
10. The Refuge serves as an internationally recognized ecological benchmark for naturally functioning arctic and subarctic ecosystems, and Refuge staff, along with partners in the scientific community, conduct monitoring and research consistent with this role.
11. The Refuge conserves archeological, historical and cultural resources.
12. The Refuge provides informational and educational opportunities to diverse audiences near and far to enhance understanding and appreciation of the Refuge, its resources, and its conservation and preservation purposes.



Hulahula River headwaters - USFWS

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge map





How to get involved

We are looking for meaningful comments that will help us determine the desired future conditions of the Refuge.

We encourage you to read this booklet before submitting your comments. The booklet provides information about the Refuge—including its purposes, values, and draft vision statement—and about the planning process and draft goals.

During this early stage of the planning process, comments are being accepted until June 7th, 2010. You can submit comments in a number of ways:

You may wish to use the comment form:

We've created a comment form that you are welcome to use. The questions on the form are provided to help stimulate your thoughts. Respond to whichever questions interest you.

In print:

The comment form is available in print on the final four pages of this booklet. Mailing instructions are located on the back page of the booklet.

On the web:

The comment form is available in two formats on the web, a fillable form and a printable form, both linked from <http://arctic.fws.gov/ccp.htm>

You can use the fillable form to type in your comments and submit them directly from your computer.

You don't need to use the comment form:

Email comments to ArcticRefuge@fws.gov

Mail written comments to:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Arctic NWR - Sharon Seim
101 12th Ave, Rm 236
Fairbanks AK 99701-6237

Additional copies of the planning booklet and comment form:

Additional copies of this booklet and comment form are available on the web linked from <http://arctic.fws.gov/ccp.htm>.

Public meetings:

Meeting dates are tentatively planned for the following communities. Visit the web at <http://arctic.fws.gov/ccp.htm> for the most current information.

Spring 2010 Meeting Dates	
Fort Yukon	April 20, 2010
Arctic Village	April 26, 2010
Venetie	April 29, 2010
Washington DC	May 4, 2010
Anchorage	May 11, 2010
Fairbanks	Mid May 2010
Kaktovik	May 20, 2010

Learn more:

Information about the Arctic Refuge is available at <http://arctic.fws.gov>.

Information about the CCP process, and all CCP-related materials, are available at <http://arctic.fws.gov/ccp.htm>. This page will be continually updated to provide the most recent information on the planning process.

We look forward to receiving your thoughts, concerns, and ideas about the Arctic Refuge. They are critical to making this plan the best it can be.

Additional information

While we sincerely encourage you to share your thoughts about the Arctic Refuge, we may not be able to address all of your concerns in the CCP. The Plan provides a broad management framework that describes the big picture of Refuge management. Smaller details, no matter how important, are often best handled through step-down plans—detailed plans on specific Refuge management issues.

Examples of step-down plans include (but are not limited to) Wilderness Stewardship, Fire Management, and Public Use Management. It is through step-down plans that we can address the finer details of Refuge management, and so it is here that we may be able to use some of the comments we do not incorporate into the CCP.

We are committed to working through step-down planning after the CCP. To that end, the CCP will include a list of step-down plans and a schedule for their completion.

Some concerns and interests related to the Refuge will not be addressed in the CCP or step-down plans. For example, only Congress can decide whether the Arctic Refuge's coastal plain (also known as the 1002 Area) should be made available for oil and gas development.



Autumn grizzly - USFWS

Refuge Plan Comment Form

If you have ideas you'd like to share with us.

At this early stage of planning we are seeking your input via meetings, this comment form (in print or on the web), and any other written comments submitted to us. We would like to learn what you think about the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, any issues or concerns you may have, and any suggestions about how best to accomplish our purposes.

The questions below are provided to help stimulate your thoughts. Respond to whichever questions interest you. Add additional pages if we haven't provided enough space.

We need to receive your comments by June 7th, 2010 in order for them to be considered in the next phase of this planning process.

You can submit your comments on a fillable form.

Just go to <http://arctic.fws.gov/ccp.htm> and scroll down to the fillable form button.

a) What is most important to you about the Arctic Refuge, its future, and the draft goals?

b) What should Refuge staff do, or avoid doing, to best meet Refuge purposes (including wildlife, wilderness, recreation, natural diversity, subsistence, international treaties, water)?

Comment form (continued)

c) Describe any issues, opportunities, or conflicts (now or in the future) you think this plan should address.

d) How do you think we could best deal with the concerns you have identified above?

e) Do you have any information that could contribute to our Wilderness or Wild and Scenic River reviews?

Comment form (continued)

f) Please share any additional thoughts, suggestions, or comments you have regarding the Arctic Refuge and its uses, management, and future.

Thank you for taking the time to give us your comments. Please remove the comment form pages from the booklet, fold them, and secure them with tape. Be sure to place the return address on the outside, attach postage, and then mail this form to the address provided on the back of this page.

We need to receive your comments on or before June 7th, 2010.

Would you like to get on or off our CCP contact list?

- Select **one**:
- ☐ **Take me off your list.** If I'm interested in the CCP I'll visit the web at <http://arctic.fws.gov/ccp.htm>
 - ☐ I would like **email notifications** when CCP materials are added to the web. Please include my name and email address on your email notification list.
 - ☐ I would like to **receive CCP planning documents in the mail.** Please include my name and address on your mailing list.

Note that names, emails, and addresses on our CCP email/mailling lists could be released to the public if we receive a request for them under provisions of the Freedom of Information Act.

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____ Country: _____

Email: _____

If you are acting in an official capacity as the representative of an organization, include the following:

Organization: _____ Title: _____



Give us your comments:

Mail your comments to:

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Arctic NWR - Sharon Seim
101 12th Ave, Rm 236
Fairbanks AK 99701-6237**

This comment form is available as a fillable form on the web, linked from <http://arctic.fws.gov/ccp.htm>, and in printable form at <http://arctic.fws.gov/pdf/ccp1b.pdf>

For more information:

Additional information about the **planning process** is available:

web: <http://arctic.fws.gov/ccp.htm>
email: ArcticRefugeCCP@fws.gov
phone: 907-456-0501
800-362-4546

Information about **Arctic Refuge** is available:

web: <http://arctic.fws.gov/>
email: arctic_refuge@fws.gov
phone: 907-456-0250
800-362-4546

Comments must be received by June 7th, 2010

- TO MAIL:**
- 1) Remove the comment form sheets from the booklet.
 - 2) Fold in half with mailing address facing outward.
 - 3) After folding, tape closed at center of each short side, and in two places on the long side. **DO NOT STAPLE!**
 - 4) Apply postage. The Post Office will only deliver if postage is attached.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Arctic NWR - Sharon Seim
101 12th Ave Rm 236
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POSTAGE
REQUIRED